00644

c. 1962/05/16

6

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

S & A

Mac:

This is the paper

I mentioned this morning

MB

SECRET

16 May 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. W. AVERELL HARRIMAN

1. Since we were unable to meet yesterday, I would like to pass on to you some of my thoughts on the military problems which we face in Southeast Asia. They group themselves around the following questions:

a. How to strengthen the FAR and correct the weaknesses made evident in the Nam Tha operation?

b. What missions to assign the U.S. forces in Thailand?

c. How to react to any subsequent breach of the cease fire in Laos?

2. Measures to Strengthen FAR

Even if the territory in the northeast lost in the recent Nam Tha action were returned to RLG control, we would still be faced with the disquieting implications of the weakness of the FAR revealed in this reverse. Our plans for a coalition government are predicated on the capability of the FAR to counterbalance the Pathet Lao forces after foreign elements have been withdrawn whereas now we must recognize the present inability of the FAR to effect this equipoise. If the coalition government does not succeed and the cease fire is breached again, the FAR remains our principal asset in salvaging some partition arrangements in Laos. In other words, regardless of the turn of the future, it is important to strengthen the FAR by all available means and as rapidly as possible.

I am sure that the Department of Defense is working on specific measures to accomplish this purpose. Nevertheless, I have attached hereto a list of the possible actions which seem worthy of further study and reference to the field for the comment of responsible commanders.

3. Missions for U.S. Forces in Thailand

Before it is possible to finalize missions for U.S. forces in Thailand, it will be necessary to work out a joint defense plan with Sarit. The deployment of our forces in Thailand should consider not only the requirements of Thailand but at the same time the possible need to complement FAR activities in Laos.

SECRET

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958. Sec. 3.6
NLK-98-62
By MML NARA. Date 6/11/99

SECRET

High on the list of security needs in Thailand is the requirement to improve the counter-insurgency efforts of the Thai Government. We have an excellent opportunity at this time to exploit our presence in Thailand to press Sarit for faster action to improve the Thai counter-insurgency capability in the north and northeast.

4. Possible Reactions to Subsequent Breaches of the Cease Fire

There is a strong possibility that after evaluating the reaction to Nam Tha, the Communists in Laos will resume military action elsewhere. Ideally, we should have several military courses of action in mind short of the final step of invoking SEATO 5. If we are permitted to use the rainy season to strengthen the FAR, we may then have available more possibilities short of engaging our own or SEATO forces in Laos. Whatever time we are allowed should be used to press the improvements of the Laotian forces mentioned elsewhere.

5. Cambodia

A final thought is that we should take advantage of Sihanouk's concern over the Laotian situation to encourage him to take additional security measures in the northeastern border area. Such action will require an early decision on Sihanouk's request for MAP support of a 3000-man increase in the Army.

6. I will be glad to discuss these thoughts with you at any time.

MAXWELL D. TAYLOR

Copy to:
General Lemnitzer
Mr. Forrestal

SECRET